

# **Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan Amendments**

## **Zoological Society of San Diego**

### **Overview — Park Boulevard Promenade**

The Zoological Society of San Diego is proposing amendments to the Balboa Park Master Plan and Central Mesa Precise Plan for the Park Boulevard Promenade. This proposal allows the current Zoo parking lot to be used for Zoo exhibits and includes plans for a plaza with a below-grade public parking structure east of and adjacent to Spanish Village. Transit usage will be facilitated by a new transit station and pedestrian bridge.

Zoo Exhibit Space — Historically zoos have changed from menageries of animals in cages to concrete and moated exhibits, and finally the latest transition -- conservation-oriented, bioclimatic habitats. Today's conservation-oriented zoos require more space.

The modern Zoo facilitates conservation activities needed to save endangered and threatened species.

- Researchers and animal care specialists learn about animal reproduction, diet and social behavior contributing to saving species in the wild.
- Visitors are educated about the natural history and geography of animals as well as the plight of endangered species related to habitat loss and encroachment resulting from human activities.
- Animal reproduction contributes to genetic diversity and self-sustaining populations of species while increasing opportunities to reintroduce species to remaining safe habitats in the wild.

The additional exhibit space will enable the Zoo to continue to pursue its conservation education mission.

Promenade — The landscaped promenade will be a pedestrian and active plaza that strengthens the link between a new Zoo entry and the Prado, connecting at the fountain in front of the Fleet Space Center. It will convert 3 small parking areas into useable park space. Public space is increased and asphalt decreased. A greenbelt with pedestrian pathway is created along Park Boulevard north of Zoo Place.

Below-Grade Public Parking Structure, Circulation and Transit — The 4 level below-grade parking structure is a 4800 space public parking facility. It is not in a leasehold. The foot print generally extends (below-grade) along Park Boulevard from just north of Zoo Place southerly almost to the Prado. The primary vehicle entrance forms an intersection with Zoo Place at Park Boulevard. A secondary entrance is at Village Place off Park Boulevard. The first level of the southern portion of the structure (accessed off Village Place) is a Transportation Center for hotel shuttles, cabs and similar transportation. Visitors using the plaza and walkways will experience no pedestrian/auto conflicts. A new and enhanced transit station that interfaces with the proposed red and blue lines is planned.

Public parking and on-street parking is maintained in the vicinity of the War Memorial. For large events, the new 4800 space parking structure is approximately a quarter mile walk to the War Memorial.

A secondary "group" entry is created at the north end of the Zoo to handle the many school buses that bring children to the Zoo. This eliminates the bus/pedestrian congestion that currently occurs and enables handling the bus traffic without disrupting the visitor use of the new parking garage.

Historical Resources — The Carousel will be relocated to the south west for a more central location on the new Promenade. The Miniature Train will be relocated to the northeast so that the train depot is the northern terminus of the new plaza. Spanish Village is not directly impacted, however this proposal creates the opportunity to re-open the east side of Spanish Village for direct access to the new plaza and the new parking structure.

Phasing — The new Park Boulevard Promenade parking structure, plaza and related improvements will be constructed prior to use of the Zoo parking lot for exhibits.

Financing — A team of financial experts has been employed to work with the Zoo, representatives of other Balboa Park Institutions and the City to explore financing options. A financing solution will be proposed to the City Council as part of the action on the proposed plan amendments.

MacLeod - October 20, 2001